Borough House (Hill Crest)
Dependency (Dry Well Shelter)
W. side of State Rt. 261, about .1 mi. S. of
Junction with old Garners Ferry Road
Stateburg
Sumter County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-364

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

ADDENDUM TO
Borough House, Dry Well Shelter
State Route 261
Stateburg
Sumter County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-364

HABS
SC
43-STATBU,
1C-

~~Addendum to~~
~~Borough House (Hill Crest):~~
~~Dependency (Dry Well Shelter)~~
~~State Route 261~~
~~Stateburg~~
~~Sumter County~~
~~South Carolina~~

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Serice
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013

HABS
SC
43-STATEBU,
1C-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Anderson 70:
Borough House, Dry Well Shelter

~~Addendum to~~
~~Borough House (Hill Crest),~~
~~Dependency (Dry Well Shelter)~~ HABS No. SC-364

Location: Part of the Borough House plantation complex on west side of State Route 261, 0.8 mile north of intersection of Route 261 and State Route 76-378; Stateburg, Sumter County, South Carolina

U.S.G.S. Wedgefield, SC 7.5 Minute Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) Coordinates:
17.542950.3757115

Present Owner: Mrs. Richard K. Anderson
The Borough House
RFD 3 Box 276
Sumter, South Carolina 29154

Present Use: storage

Significance: The Dry Well Shelter (or "Dry Well") is a dependency of the Borough House plantation complex. It was originally used as a natural refrigerator, the cool temperature at the bottom (about 55° F) serving to preserve the freshness of vegetables and dairy products. Built of rammed earth c. 1821, it is one of six dependencies (in addition to portions of the main house) on site to be built of this material. This complex is of potential national significance because of the number of early Greek Revival structures it contains which were built of this unusual material.

The Borough House complex was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Stateburg Historic Distric in 1971 and as an individual site in 1972.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

NOTE: Background material and site history for the Dry Well may be found in data pages for the Borough House, Stateburg, Sumter County, South Carolina, HABS No. SC-362. Data specific to the Dry Well follows below.

A. PHYSICAL HISTORY

1. DATE OF ERECTION: c. 1821

2. ARCHITECT: The designer of the Dry Well is thought to be Dr. William Wallace Anderson, M.D. (1789-1864), owner of the Borough House from 1819 to 1864. (For further information on Dr. Anderson, see Borough House data pages, p. 6.)

3. ORIGINAL AND SUBSEQUENT OWNERS: see Borough House data pages, pp. 7-8.

4. BUILDERS AND SUPPLIERS:

The Dry Well was built chiefly by slaves under the direction of Dr. Anderson. The rammed earth construction method used by Dr. Anderson was based on a description in Rural Economy by S.W. Johnson (New York: 1806); Dr. Anderson's copy of this book is in the Borough House library. It is not known whether slave labor or hired workers executed the finish carpentry. The clay used to build the earth walls was dug on site, and the stones and brick used for foundations were also supplied locally. Hardware for the door may have been made locally. The supplier of the sheet metal roofing is unknown.

5. ORIGINAL PLANS AND CONSTRUCTION:

a. PLANS: No original plans are known to survive.

b. CONSTRUCTION: Foundations of the building were not examined by HABS below grade, and no written data specific to the foundations of this structure were found. However, the earth in the region is a dense, solid clay, and for this reason the foundations are very likely flagstones superimposed by brick, similar to that observed in 1926 for the nearby Church of the Holy Cross (also a rammed earth structure) by Thomas A.H. Miller, a agricultural engineer from the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Public Roads. Three courses of locally fired clay brick are visible at the bases of the walls on the interior of the building. Exterior walls are made of rammed earth, and the unfinished interior surfaces provide a unique opportunity to examine the internal structure of the wall (see HABS photo SC-364-4). The peaks of the gables are constructed of brick for the last two feet of their height, perhaps due to a difficulty in ramming earth at a peak. The roof structure is wooden, except for the standing-seam metal roof.

The "well" itself is built in two levels, completely lined by brick walls. Access is by a wooden staircase with a landing. The upper part of the well is 7'-4" square and 11'-5" deep. In the center of the bottom of this level is a much smaller well, 2'-1" square and 6'-4" deep. The walls show traces of whitewash, but no parging.

Please see data pages for the Borough House (pp. 9-12) for further discussion of the rammed earth construction method used in this building.

6. ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS:

No alterations or additions to the basic form of this building are recorded or apparent in the structure. However, it appears an attempt to "Victorianize" the building's appearance was made sometime in the late 19th century by adding turned pendants to the door hood, and scalloped bargeboards and fascia to the eaves. The building may have been built with Greek Revival details. A standing seam sheet metal roof was added c. 1920, perhaps replacing cypress shingles. At an unknown date (est. c. 1900), three steel tie rods were installed in the building bridging the tops of the north and south walls to keep the walls from tipping outward (the tie rods and cracks in the walls may be seen in photo SC-364-4). The fascia boards on the north and south walls double as wall anchors for the tie rods.

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND ASSOCIATIONS

Please see data pages for the Borough House, pp. 17-30.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. GENERAL STATEMENT:

1. ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER: The external appearance of this structure is fairly plain, the only prominent decoration being scalloped bargeboards and fascia in addition to three turned pendants in the door hood. These decorations, thought to be a later addition, gives the building a Picturesque flavor popular during the Victorian era. The building consists of one unfinished room with a wooden floor, under which is the "dry well" for storing foodstuffs. Exterior walls are finished with a yellow tinted stucco, and stuccoed gutters lie at the foundations on the north and south sides of the building under the roof drips. The entry door is painted a dark green, most other exterior woodwork being white, and the sheet metal roof venetian red. The roof supports a wooden cupola which

serves as a ventilator; it is painted venetian red with white trim. The building has no chimneys or porches. In its colors and finishes, this building harmonizes with the main house.

Despite its utilitarian appearance, this structure, like most of the other rammed earth dependencies at the Borough House, appears to have been designed on classical geometric principles. The base unit used in this building differs considerably in its size from that used at other dependencies on the site, such as 1'-2" or 4'-8" (School and Weaving House) or 1'-6" and 5'-0" (Dr. Anderson's Office). This structure uses a 10-inch unit. There is always the danger of reading a system back into a structure which the structure's original designer did not use, but in this case, though the 10-inch unit varies considerably from the others, it factors so easily into a number of important dimensions that its original employment seems certain. There are some variations, but it is conceivable that these may be due to construction errors because of their small and unsystematic size. Perhaps the original plans and elevations were laid out on a sheet of graph paper--the superimposition of a grid onto the elevations and plan (see p. 4) for purposes of analysis suggests this possibility.

The side elevation will be treated first since it so clearly shows Dr. Anderson's reliance on squares of various sizes and interrelationships. The wall beneath the fascia board is composed of two squares 8 units to a side, or 6'-8" x 13'-4" overall. The ventilator window, about 2 x 3 units, is centered in this wall with the sill about halfway up the wall toward the fascia board. The fascia board itself is 1 unit high to the eaves. The eaves then rest on two squares 9 units to a side, above which lies the roof, which fits in a rectangle composed of three squares 6 units on a side. The roof then is 2/3 the height of the building from the base to the eaves, and its height is 1/3 of its length. The cupola elevation seems to fit a square 5 units on a side which in turn rests in elevation on a second 5-unit square drawn on the eaves line. (Not even the weather vane pole escapes the system--it is 2 units high.) It is interesting to note that the building's height to the top of the cupola roof (about 20 units) is nearly the same as the overall roof length, suggesting that the entire elevation could fit a square, but this square wasn't drawn in on p. 4 since it isn't centered about the elevation's centerline.

Turning to the front (or end) elevation, the use of the system is considerably simpler, and may even appear to break down. The side elevation was built mostly on squares having an even number

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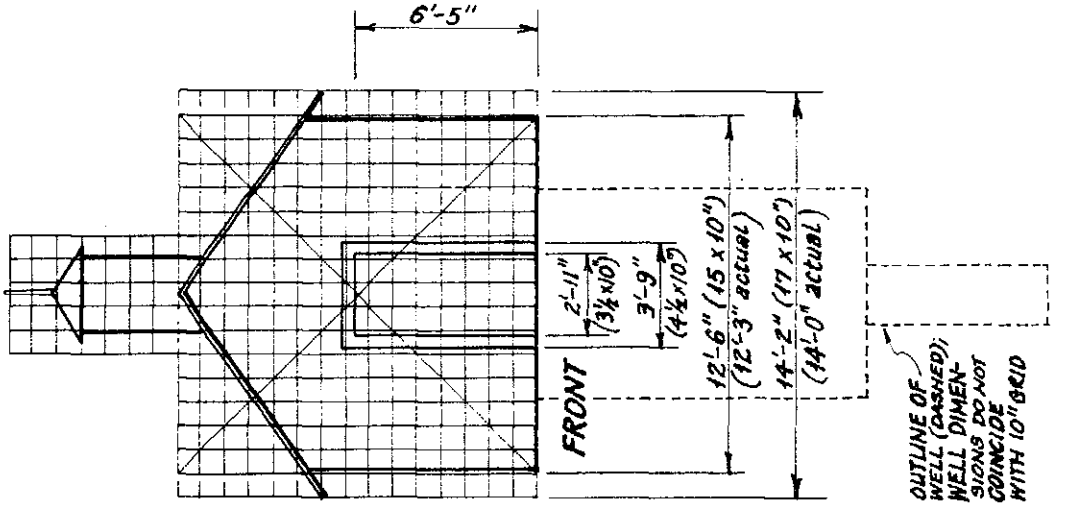

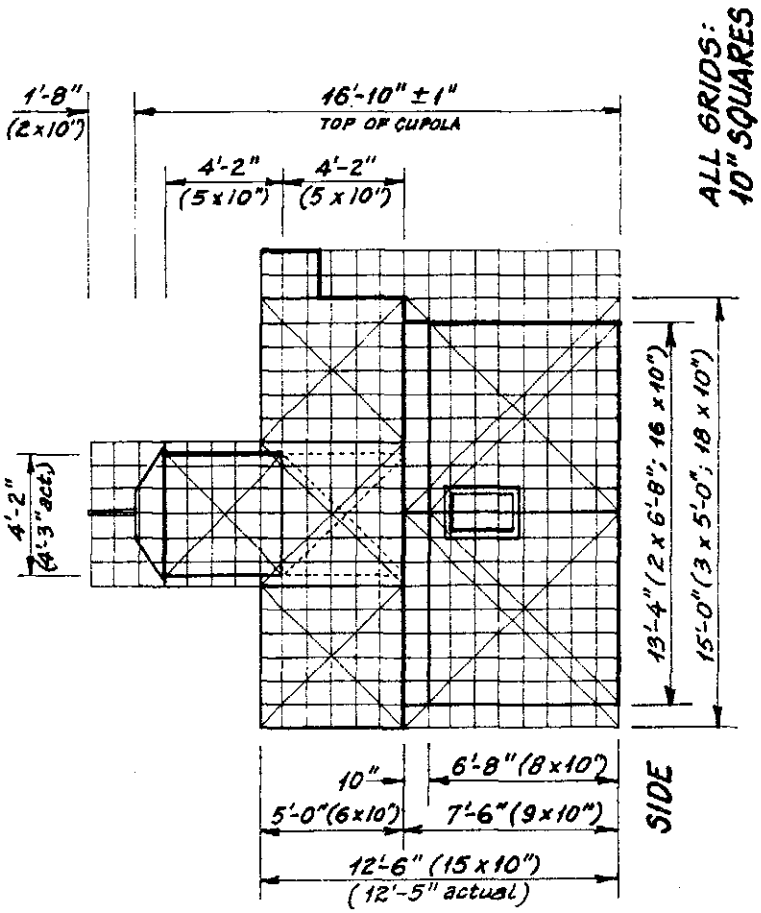

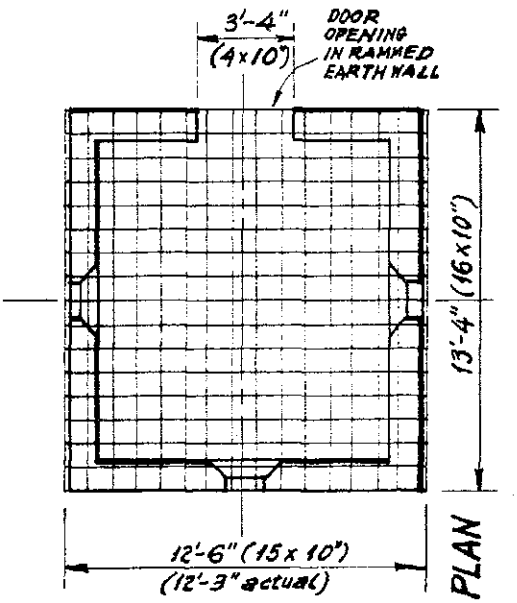

of units to a side; the front elevation seems to turn to odd-numbered units for dimensions. To begin, the elevation from roof peak to base and side to side to the walls appears to rest in a square 15 units on a side, though the front wall is 3 inches short of being exactly 15 units wide. The building's width over the eaves is 2 inches short of 17 units. The cupola is slightly more than three units wide, and the finish dimensions of the door seems to break with the system altogether.

The plan is almost a square at 15 x 16 units; it is possible its proportions were dictated by the relationships between the elevations. There seems to be little structural reason related to the "well" for this variation. None of the dimensions of the dry well itself are integer multiples of the 10-inch unit.

2. CONDITION OF FABRIC: The exterior walls, foundations, and roof are all sound. The building is actively maintained by its owner.

B. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR:

1. OVERALL DIMENSIONS: The structure is 12'-3" x 13'-4" in plan on the exterior. Height to the roof peak from grade on the east side is about 12'-3".

2. FOUNDATIONS: Not visible above grade.

3. WALL CONSTRUCTION: Rammed earth, with brick used for gable peaks.

4. OPENINGS:

a. DOORWAYS AND DOORS: The building has only one doorway, located in the east side. It has a simple flat casing, the door being made up of planks secured together by cross members and braces nailed to the backs.

b. WINDOWS: There are no windows proper in this structure, however, there are three lovered, unshuttered wooden ventilators, one each on the south, west, and north sides of the building.

7. ROOF: Single gable, supported by open wooden trusses and covered by standing-seam sheet metal. A cupola ventilator with a hip roof is located midway along the main roof peak.

C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR:

1. FLOOR PLANS: This structure contains a single room at the ground level measuring approximately 11'-5" by 10'-3". Beneath the wooden floor is a well measuring about 7'-4" square and 11'-5" deep, whose floor contains a yet smaller well in its center.

2. FLOORING: The ground floor is unfinished cypress boards approximately 3/4 inch thick, except for a band of brick and clay tile laid around the edges of the walls. The floors of the wells are brick laid on grade.

3. WALL AND CEILING FINISHES: The interior walls are unfinished and there is no ceiling. The holes visible in the walls (see HABS photo SC-364-4) are artifacts of the construction process. The voids were created when the timber braces holding the wooden wall forms together were removed after the earth was rammed.

4. OPENINGS: Windows and the door were described above. None have casings or other finish work in the interior, but all have deep reveals due to the 12-inch thickness of the walls.

5. DECORATIVE FEATURES AND TRIM:

a. TRIM: There is no interior trim.

b. HARDWARE: All hardware on the door is wrought iron. The door is carried on strap hinges fastened by nails. it is kept shut by a hasp, though a plain box lock with no knobs could be used to secure the building.

6. MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT:

The structure contains neither plumbing, electrical, nor mechanical equipment.

D. SITE

1. GENERAL SITING AND ORIENTATION: The Dry Well is located approximately three yards southwest of the Summer Kitchen (for convenience to cooking facilities), and about 15 yards due west of the Borough House. Its front (east elevation) faces a grassy path connecting to the gravel path running across the back of the Borough House and by the Summer Kitchen. The other three sides of the Dry Well are surrounded by large shrubs and trees.

Please see data pages for the Borough House for further description of the surrounding grounds (pp. 46-50) and consult measured drawings of the landscape and site.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please see data pages for the Borough House for a complete bibliography (pp. 50-53)

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Dry Well was recorded as part of the Borough House recording project. Please see data pages for the Borough House for the project description (pp. 53-54).